(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It has been conveyed that Government of India is at present not accepting any bilateral assistance for Tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction but would be willing to receive assistance through multilateral agencies like the World Bank, ADB and UN organisations.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan Shoichi Nakagawa, Finance Minister of Japan Sadakazu Tanigaki and Minister for Economic and Fiscal Policy of Japan Heizo Takenaka visited India during the month of January, 2005. During these visits, issues relating to bilateral economic and commercial relations were discussed.

Screening of containers at foreign ports

370. SHRI MURLI DEORA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has decided to join the US-led Container Security Initiative which envisages exchange of custom personnel and technology to screen containers at foreign ports;

(b) if so, the composition thereof including Indian participation;

(c) whether Intelligence Agencies and the Customs Authorities have objected to allow U.S. personnel at Indian ports;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the benefits to be derived from this partnership?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) The Government is negotiating the introduction of Container Security Initiative arrangements at the Jawaharlal Nehru Port as a pilot project on a reciprocal basis.

(b) Details of arrangements including composition of Customs complement are yet to be worked out.

(c) and (d) Committee of Secretaries approved negotiations for the introduction of Container Security Initiative on 23 December, 2004 with the participation of all relevant Departments and Agencies.

(e) The introduction of Container Security Initiative arrangements is expected to minimize the risk of containers being used to ship dangerous cargo, including weapons of mass destruction. Its collateral benefit would be to detect various methods of trade fraud. Conversely, the non-introduction of Container Security Initiative arrangements could jeopardize the movement of containers to India's largest trading partner, the United States.

Introduction of Contract Labour Act

371. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to enact a Contract Labour Act;

(b) if so, the salient features thereof;

(c) whether there is pressure on Government from World Bank and other multinational funding agencies in this regard;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether there is wide opposition about the proposed legislation because it would make vulnerable the workforce in the country to vagaries of market dynamics and lead to instability among them; and

(f) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRASEKHAR RAO): (a) to (f) At present, there is no proposal to either enact a new Contract Labour Act or to amend the existing Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, 1970.